

# Japan Christian Activity News

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## NCCJ MISSION CONSULTATION 1981

### TOWARD A CHURCH WHICH BEARS THE SUFFERING OF THE AGE

The NCCJ Consultation on Mission for this year was held at the Amagi Sanso Retreat Center Nov. 9-11, 1981. The 33 participants included representatives from the Japan Episcopal Church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Japan, the Japan Baptist Union, The United Church of Christ in Japan, the Korean Christian Church in Japan, the Japan Bible Society, the Japan Christian Academy, the YWCA, and the Roman Catholic Church. Other participants were the invited speakers, NCCJ representatives, a reporter from the Christ Weekly, and a guest from the NCCC-USA.

The Rev. Mitsuhiro Inukai, UCCJ, of the Chikuhō district in Kyushu, gave the theme address. Rev. Hiroo Sekita, Aoyama Gakuin professor and pastor of Tode Preaching Point in Kawasaki, led two provocative Bible studies based on Elijah's encounter with the Widow of Zarepath and his confrontation with the priests of Baal. Other speakers were Masanao Watanabe, NSKK, Bishop of the Hōddaidō Diocese; Hiroshi Yamamoto, Lutheran pastor of Kozōji Church near Nagoya; and Mune-toshi Maejima, UCCJ, pastor of the Minami Sumiyoshi Church in Osaka and member of the Kamagasaki Mission among day laborers.

In the opening worship Rev. Shoichi Kominami, Nippon Seikokai General Secretary and Chairperson of the NCCJ Division of Mission and Service, stressed the unity of the church -- one body, one spirit, one hope -- sharing one context and one mission. It is the church's task to blend and harmonize the variety of gifts so that they supplement and reinforce one another.

In the theme presentation, Rev. Mitsuhiro Inukai spoke from his experience in northern Kyushu where he serves a tiny

congregation in a former mining community now reduced to a population of 300. Citing Dr. Noboru Iwamura's critical analysis of the mission in Nepal, he pointed out that though the church may think of itself as ministering within the community, it is often seen by the community as a "church on a hill" -- secure and somewhat isolated from the suffering of the world below.

Mr. Inukai appealed movingly for a Christian solidarity such that we are not fully the church until the whole family is present. The reality is, rather, that the church becomes an "incomplete body" (*ketsurakutai*) like the ninety-nine sheep with one lost, because something is missing from the body. That something, like the lost sheep that is most important, may be absent, yet the group is indifferent to  
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(NCCJ Mission . . .)  
that absence.

But when the church tries to see and hear what is happening among the people of the community, instead of regarding them as objects of mission and targets of evangelism, the church will find with great surprise that God was already living and working among them. Christian mission means for the church to serve as God's eyes and ears and be open to the suffering of the people.

Responding from the Anglican tradition, Bishop Watanabe stressed the sacramental presence of the Lord completing the church and enabling it to be the Body of Christ. When we speak of bearing the neighbor's pain as our own pain, who is this neighbor? Pointing out that we like to choose "neighbors" who share our own background, interests, skin color, way of thinking, and faith, Bishop Watanabe pointed out that the "neighbor" we are speaking of is not chosen by us. This neighbor is given to us by God, who brings together the one who needs and the one who can help. In the encounter they discover that each needs and each can help. This is the basis for the horizontal worldwide "Partnership in Mission" effort of the Anglican Communion.

Hiroshi Yamamoto, serving a Lutheran congregation in Kozoji New Town, spoke out of a deep concern for the Korean minority in Japan. He shared his own discovery, going back to the NCCJ Japan-Korea Consultation in 1973, of many forms of invisible discrimination in society, and emphasized the responsibility of the church and individual Christians to expose hidden prejudice. Growth in solidarity with Korean Christians is growth in love: a love that comes from forgiving and being forgiven and breaks down the walls of separation.

Munetoshi Maejima, Kyodan pastor in South Osaka for 10 years, shared his own struggles with the Expo-70 issue, his learning experience in the slum area of Manila, and his ministry in the day-laborer section of Kamagasaki. He described his church as one that tries to be in dialog with the community -- not an issue-centered church, but one deeply involved in the issues of society. Pastoral activism, as he sees it, must declare, follow, and apply the Word of God in the social context. As we struggle to find our Christian identity in

our own social context, we need the support of the larger Christian community in order to maintain that identity in dialog with the world.

Small group discussions focused on the nature of the church, the nature of mission, the Christian in society, the role of the pastor, and the relation between sacrament and mission. It is not enough for the church to endure the world's pain and minister to suffering individuals. Sharing the burdens of the age involves confronting the structures of society, all the built-in prejudice and injustice. It requires willingness on the part of the church itself to change. The dialectic of confession and forgiveness is applicable to society, and to the church itself, as well as to individuals.

Participants in this challenging consultation were left with the continuing task of learning to move forward together from joint discussion about mission toward more effective joint action in mission as the body of Christ in the world, bearing the suffering of the age.  
(Alden Matthews)

## THE OKINAWA CONNECTION

### INVOLVEMENT OF TOKYO CHURCHES

*The following article illustrates that the demands of mission have not allowed Kitashiku (North Tokyo Sub-district) of the Kyodan to sit idle until the Tokyo District is able to meet again. Tokyo District has not held a General Assembly meeting for ten years.*

*Kitashiku is made up of 56 congregations in north Tokyo. Our writer, Tom Paton, is a missionary assigned by the United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan) to Kitashiku.*

"I felt like a stranger in my own land," Rev. Takanori Fujiwara reported with some emotion upon his return from his one month trip to Okinawa. "What do you say after you've said 'hello?' One third of the Okinawan population, including 10,000 Koreans, died in World War II, and after the war, the rest were cut off and abandoned by Japan and by us in the Kyodan also. Today military bases and oil companies, economic recession and

(continued on p. 3)



(The Okinawa . . .)

neglect are oppressing our Okinawan brothers and sisters. I was ignorant of this. We in Kitashiku must become an oasis in the desert of mainland Japan, by studying Okinawan history and aggressively sharing fellowship and burdens with our Okinawan churches."

Rev. Fujiwara, Moderator of Kitashiku, made an official visit to Okinawa and the Ryukyu Island chain, both of which have long been considered by many Japanese as the insignificant tail hanging off the back-side of Japan. He visited the people of 23 churches, a high-school camp, a Hansen's disease sanitorium, military bases -- both U.S. and Japan's so-called Self-Defense Forces -- and the cancerous, sea-destroying CTS -- Central Terminal Station. The CTS facilities are used to hold crude oil from the Mid-East and S.E. Asia for transshipment to mainland facilities. The CTS, in addition to requiring land space for oil storage tanks, causes pollution through oil spills and disrupts the natural sea currents, damaging sea life.

Okinawa has always been viewed as a poor cousin by Japan. Though once the Kingdom of Ryukyu was proud, with its own economy and fleets which traded with China and the rest of Asia, Okinawa now has been reduced to the poorest prefecture in Japan. Its total population was forced by the Japanese military to repel the U.S. invasion in 1945 and survivors were ordered to commit suicide. (One of the commanders who gave that order did not commit suicide himself, but lived out his life in Tokyo after the war.)

To the Japanese, for whom the myth of their racial homogeneity is central to their national identity, the Okinawan people's varied racial mixture and rich cultural heritage--Chinese, Korean, Japanese, Portugese, and more recently, American -- is an embarrassment. After the return of the administrative control of Okinawa to Japan in 1972, (until that time Japanese citizens needed a passport to go to Japan) many Okinawan people, proud of their history and not wanting their children to forget the suffering and endurance that brought them to the present, referred to themselves as "Okinawan Japanese." But voices in Japan spoke against this trend, "We Japanese call ourselves Japanese and there is no need to recall for us that

you are from Okinawa."

Until 1945 and the signing of the San Francisco Treaty separating Okinawa from Japan, Kyodan churches of Okinawa were a part of the Kyushu Kyoku. But some of the mainland pastors who survived the war returned at that time to Japan and relations between the Okinawa churches and the Kyodan essentially ceased. Feeling rejected by the parent church, the Okinawan churches formed the Okinawa Christian Federation in 1946, selecting from among the lay leadership some for ordination. They had almost no pastors of their own. In 1958 the Federation was changed to the Okinawa Christian Kyodan, an independent national church seeking its own self-support and self-reliance.

In 1969, however, in the midst of the demonstrations against U.S. involvement in Vietnam and the struggle for reunification of Okinawa with Japan, the Okinawa Christian Kyodan and the Kyodan (UCCJ) united. Today leaders in the Okinawa churches are very critical of that union, but in 1969 neither side saw it for what it was, not the merger of two national and independent churches, but the mainland Kyodan welcoming home the Okinawa churches after an unfortunate, but almost forgotten absence of 23 years.

Kitashiku is the first district or sub-district within the Kyodan to seek a formal relationship of solidarity and cooperation with Okinawa Kyoku, though some funds have been sent by Kyodan congregations and many individuals have made informal visits. That a sub-district (shiku) should do this is rather unusual. In the church polity of the Kyodan, only districts (kyoku) are recognized as legal ecclesiastical structures. The six shiku of Tokyo Kyoku --though some of the shiku have more churches than several of the other kyoku -- are without status or vote in Kyodan affairs. In the past ten years while the Tokyo Kyoku has been unable to hold its General Assembly, the various shiku have blossomed, taking on Kyoku-like responsibility for fellowship and mission among their churches. Kitashiku has reached beyond its borders in fellowship and mission, especially with Korea, and now with Okinawa.

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(The Okinawa . . .)

Rev. Shushin Sadaie, chairperson of the Kitashiku Mission Committee, summarized the impact of Kitashiku's commitment to Okinawan churches. "For years the Okinawan churches have carried the burden of the Kyodan and we didn't know it. Our Okinawa Kyoku partners are challenging us to re-think our mission approach and responsibilities as a shiku. Some in our shiku will criticize us as a shiku for doing cooperative mission that they would like left to the Kyodan national offices. But we are learning from our Okinawa brothers and sisters in Christ that we cannot divorce our local mission in North Tokyo from the wider issues in Asia and around the world, the growing gap between the rich and the poor, world hunger, and Japan's policies of manipulation of Asia for profit. We must, together with Okinawa churches, carry the burdens that Christ has given us."

This new relationship will be an up-hill battle, for among the ministers and membership of the shiku's 56 churches, only 27 persons attended Rev. Fujiwara's slide-show report of his Okinawa visit. The talents and sufferings of Japan's "poor cousins" to the south still don't hold much interest for the Japanese, inside or outside the church.#

(Tom Paton)

## BOOK NOTE

James M. Phillips, From the Rising of the Sun: Christians and Society in Contemporary Japan, 307 pages paperback. (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1981)

Robert Lee, author of Stranger in the Land: The Church in Japan, commented on the back cover of Phillips' book; "Here at last we have in Professor Phillips' book an indispensable road map to guide us in our understanding of Christianity in post war Japan . . . I predict that this book will remain definitive in its field for many years to come."

The American Society of Missiology is publishing this work in collaboration with Orbis books. The ASM seeks to "publish scholarly works of high merit and wide interest on numerous aspects of missiology."

In the preface Phillips says: "The writer sends this work of contemporary history into the world with no little trepidation, for he knows from his experience in teaching history that contemporary accounts of events are subject to all kinds of limited perspectives. He invites his readers to write him any comments and criticisms that occur to them."

I recommend this book as a most important resource for those concerned about mission in Japan. I also expect to respond to the author's request for comments.

The book is under consideration for translation into Japanese and is available through Kyobun Kan. #  
(JR)

## MUTUALITY IN MISSION TO CANADA

Representing the Women's Committee of the National Christian Council of Japan from September 16 to October 29, I participated in a 6-week mutuality in mission program of the United Church of Canada under the theme, "Nuclear Proliferation and the Christian's Response." Lina Volkus from Papua New Guinea and I travelled in three provinces: British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan.

On September 18 "The Vancouver Province" newspaper reported on the issue of reparations to Japanese Canadians whose property was seized during World War II.

(continued on p. 5)





*(Mutuality in Mission . . .)*

Sitting in the kitchen of a local church I heard a similar personal history from a woman who has lived in a small Japanese community in Canada. I saw the names of those who died in World War II on the walls of local churches as I travelled in British Columbia. I had not realized that Canada was involved in the war to that extent.

In February 1980 the British Columbia government passed a 7-year moratorium on the development of uranium properties. This was explained to me by people who won a court case in Rock Creek where citizens fought against a company which attempted to mine uranium. On the B.C. Kelowna TV station I was in a 6-minute live show opposing nuclear energy development.

Before our broadcast, there was a presentation by a group seeking the lifting of the mining moratorium of uranium in B.C. My task was to convince people of the negative effects of uranium mining in relation to the third world and the unacceptable risk of even low level radiation citing the experience of A-bomb victims in Japan and the long range effects of low level radiation.

The phrase BEAUTIFUL B.C., written on the license plates of all cars, has become nonsense in Revelstoke because of B. C. Hydro's construction of a massive power generation facility. A village in the Rockies disappeared under the water and there is concern about the land in other areas being submerged.

After the dam is completed the electricity is to be sent to the U.S.

Canada has been involved in the production and shipment of uranium to the U. S. for bombs since the 1940's. In this connection the Saskatchewan Conference of the United Church of Canada has confronted the government to halt uranium mining in a resolution passed at their general assembly. The resolution states, in part:

*"Saskatchewan uranium is contributing to the alarming problem of nuclear weapons proliferation and the threat of nuclear war. This is contrary to what we stand for, and therefore we have to do everything in our power to change this situation."*

We met different groups in churches and schools and discussed problems of international linkages relative to nuclear issues and exchanged information regarding nuclear weapons, disarmament and nuclear energy problems. Consciousness raising was suggested in order to build a network of protest against nuclear proliferation as a Christian response.

(Aiko Carter)

**WCC PUBLIC HEARING ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS  
AND DISARMAMENT-- JAPAN PARTICIPATES**

Ms. Takako Doi, member of the Japanese Diet for the last 11 years and Prof. Okamoto Mitsuo, Prof. of Shikoku Gakuin Daigaku (SCC) and Vice-Chair of the Peace Studies Association of Japan left November 19 to attend the International Public Hearing on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament to be held in Amsterdam Nov. 23-27 under World Council of Churches sponsorship.

Ms. Doi is one of the 18 persons who make up the Hearing Group which will be responsible for conducting the hearings. Prof. Okamoto attends as an expert witness chosen by the Christian Conference of Asia.

Ms. Aiko Carter, editor of JCAN is attending as translator for Ms. Doi.#

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*"Can the Gospel Thrive in Japanese soil? Shame, Guilt and Grace in a Unique Culture" will be the theme of the 1982 Hayama Men's Missionary Seminar to be held at Amagi Sanso, January 5-7.*



## A FIRESIDE CHAT ABOUT JAPAN IN ASIA

Prof. Mikio Sumiya

Under the sponsorship of Waseda Hoshien (a Christian service institution near Waseda University) on October 24, Prof. Mishio Sumiya, President of Tokyo Women's Christian University, spoke on "Japan in the Midst of Asia." His talk was the first in a series of 5 lectures billed as "Fireside Chats" relating to Christian responsibilities toward Asia. Sumiya expressed surprise at the large number--over 70--who gathered.

A former professor of economics at Tokyo University, Prof. Sumiya suggested that Japan's place in Asia needs to be seen in the historical context of Japan's drive for modernization which started in the 1860s. An early motto of that period, wakon-yohsai (Japanese spirit-Western skills), illustrates the policy of acquiring western technology but utilizing it within the framework of Japanese values. He pointed out that this mindset had no room for Asia. In fact, according to Sumiya, Asia was viewed simply as the refrigerator supplying food for Japan. Japan felt it had nothing to learn from Asia. Today Japan seems to still view Asia primarily as a source of raw materials and food, said Sumiya, though the form of control is now economic and not military.

In commenting on Japan's influence in Asia, Prof. Sumiya reminded his audience of the time when it was said that if the U.S. economy sneezed, Japan caught pneumonia. Since Japan's economy has now become powerful, the situation has changed vis-a-vis the U.S. Today when Japan's economy sneezes various Asian countries catch a cold, or possibly pneumonia. He illustrated this by saying that in some cases where Japan may get 3% of its imports from a particular country, those goods constitute 30% of that country's exports. A small reduction in imports by Japan could be magnified 10 times in terms of some country's total exports.

One difference in Japan's movement into various Asian countries economically, and earlier Western world incursions into African or Asian countries, is that when the Western world went in, they also set up some sort of educational systems, medical services, and other social

service facilities. In the case of Japan and its present movement into Asian countries, the relation is almost completely commercial--what he called "cultural components" are not part of the relation. In passing, Sumiya made the observation that the Asian countries which seem to be developing in a more healthy manner economically are those with kanji (Chinese ideographs) as basic to their language (and therefore Confucian patterns of thought).

Prof. Sumiya suggested that the Japanese regard China in a different light from most of the other Asian countries since Japan now sees China as the honke (head family) of the Japanese.

The next "Fireside Chat" in the series (November 21) deals with China.#

### SHIN NIKKI NOT TO ENTER NCC

The Church of Christ in Japan, or Shin Nikki (CCJ) at its 31st General Assembly meeting (October 14-16) rejected a proposal to enter the NCC.

The issue of membership in the NCC has been under consideration for six years, with this particular proposal coming as a result of a study done on a General Assembly referral made two years ago.

The proposal to enter NCC was made by the denominational executive committee. The motion to enter NCC was lost on a tie vote, tabling the motion and in effect blocking the proposal.

It was suggested that the issue is not ecumenical cooperation nor a question of whether or not they should enter the NCC. Rather, the timing was reported to have been the most important concern in this vote. Some felt it would be acting too hastily to join the NCC now.

Therefore this vote does not constitute a final decision regarding CCJ membership in the NCC.

### COMMENT FROM NCC GENERAL SECRETARY

"Though it is regrettable for both the CCJ and the NCC that the proposal of the CCJ executive committee lost," says General Secretary Shoji, "there are  
(continued on p.7)



(General Secretary Comments)

still signs of establishing a more positive relationship between the NCC and the CCJ. The CCJ General Assembly set up a committee dealing with ecumenical relations composed of most of the members of the executive committee. This committee will relate to other denominations as well as the NCC.

"I believe that it is most desirable for the CCJ to join in a broader ecumenical dialogue and cooperation in order to move forward in mission at this critical point in Japan's history. It will be most helpful for the NCC to have CCJ as a member, since CCJ will contribute to the ecumenical dialogue through its ecclesiological understanding and its keen sense of the importance of Church confessions."

INTERNATIONAL ABILYMPICS HELD IN  
TOKYO AND CHIBA

The International Abilympics (I. Abil.) took place in Tokyo and Chiba from Oct. 19 to 24. The word "Abilympic" was constructed by combining parts of the words "ability" and "Olympic" and means "Olympics of Ability." Over 850 persons from 56 countries participated in this event, the first of its kind ever held on a world-wide basis.

The purpose of I. Abil. was to improve the vocational skills of disabled persons, increase their vocational independence, and raise the level of awareness of the general public of the vocational skills of disabled persons. In addition, the I. Abil. increased international friendship opportunities for the participants. This was true also within the Christian community since there were many Christian participants--both lay and clergy.

Three events were held during the I. Abil.--skills contests, demonstrations and exhibitions, and an international vocational rehabilitation seminar.

Since modern social welfare services developed, to a large extent, out of Christian concern, many in the field of rehabilitation for the disabled are Christians. This is true in Japan, where only about 1% of the total population are Christians with a church relation.

In the I. Abil. this trend is evident.

Several Christians served on the staff of 10 working with the Japan Organizing Committee. Mr. Ryosuke Matsui, a member of the Nagayama United Church of Christ in Japan (Kyodan), was a key person in the central office.

The Japan Red Cross organized a corps of "Language Volunteers" to assist in the carrying out of the I. Abil. They requested all universities in the Tokyo area to participate in providing language volunteers. Many Christian schools and the YM and the YWCA's responded. Of the over 300 who served, 65% came from Christian universities.

A group of 36 persons from the French, Spanish, and English speaking communities volunteered as resource persons holding weekly meetings studying language and helping prepare the large number of language volunteers. Of the 36 resource persons 27 were Christian.

The language volunteers were assigned to work with the participants to assist them in communication and in other ways as needed. Six of the 27 volunteers were from the missionary community and 2 missionaries, Carolyn Francis and Akiie Ninomiya served on the I. Abil. staff.

Rev. Godaro Lorrin, a minister of the Danpei United Church of Christ in Micronesia and a leader of the Micronesia delegation, was one of those who took advantage of the occasion to visit some of the Japanese congregations which support his denomination in Micronesia.

Many commented that the I. Abil. was one of the most significant international events during the whole International Year of Disabled Persons.

The I. Abil. is continuing in various forms. For example, one language volunteer group is continuing to meet weekly to study the Bible, particularly the life of Jesus and the disabled.

(Akiie Ninomiya)



## BOOK NOTE



(from cover of Minjung Theology)

Kim Yong Bock, ed., Minjung Theology. 196 pages paperback. (Christian Conference of Asia, Singapore, 1981.)

Minjung Theology seeks to set out the substance of the Christian faith as it is confessed in Korea by those Koreans concerned about the mission of the church and human rights in our neighboring country. The publication, sponsored by the Commission on Theological Concerns (CTC) of the CCA, opens with an introductory essay by D. Freeman Niles, Executive Secretary of the CTC.

4 of the 7 Korean authors are described in the book as "formerly" holders of various academic positions in Korea; the Korean government no longer permits them to teach or be employed in educational institutions. The writers deal with how the gospel interacts with Korean cultural and present-day political realities.

I have been waiting for such a book for some time and found it fascinating reading.

It may be ordered from the NCC at this address for ¥1,000 plus postage. It is also being translated into Japanese for publication. (JR)

### COUNCIL OF COOPERATION WORKING GROUP MEETS NOVEMBER 19

The Daihyoshakai (Representatives' Meeting) of the Council of Cooperation (CoC) was held on Nov. 19 at the Japan Christian Center, Tokyo. Because the CoC has not been able to hold an official general meeting of constituent bodies

(the Kyodan, the CoC-Related Schools Council, the Japan Christian Social Work League and the Japan-North American Commission on Cooperative Mission) since December 1976, matters of practical importance have been handled in recent years in a meeting with two representatives from each body.

This year the selection of Nozomu Tomita as the new CoC Acting General Secretary was agreed upon.

Financial matters such as the 1982 budget were postponed until a later meeting. At this later meeting the list of Kyodan-related missionary personnel requests, including those for missionary teachers will also be considered. (T. Reagan)

## NEWS ITEMS

### ENGLISH LESSONS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS: OSAKA AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL OPENS CLASS

An Osaka chapter of Amnesty International (AI) started English conversation classes for its own members in May so that they might become more proficient in speaking English in matters related with human rights.

It has now been decided to open the classes to non-AI members so that other interested in human rights can improve their English language communication skills.##

### YMCA LEADERS FROM CHINA VISIT JAPAN

"The future of our work looks bright." according to Lee Chao Pau, Associate General Secretary of the Union of YMCAs of China. "God's love is spreading to all Chinese," continued Whan Su I, Associate General Secretary of the Shanghai YMCA.

The visitors were in Japan from Oct. 20 to Nov. 3 to acquaint the wider public with the work of the Chinese YMCAs, which has been revitalized following the removal in 1978 of the former Chinese government leaders known as the Gang of Four.

They also reported on the state of the church in China.

(from Kirisuto Shimbum 11/7/81)